

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9724

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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USMISSION USUN

USIA WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

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TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJECT: SEPT. 25 SYRIAN PRESS REPORTS OPTIMISM THAT

PROGRESS WILL BE MADE TOWARD SETTLING CRISIS

1. PRESS REFLECTED NEW AIR OF OPTIMISM FOLLOWING SARKIS INAUGURATION THAT EFFORTS TO SETTLE CRISIS WILL WITNESS SOME PROGRESS IN COMING DAYS. BANNER HEADLINES: "PRES. ASAD UNDERTAKES INTENSIVE ACTIVITY TO DEAL WITH LEBANESE SITUATION. ATMOSPHERE OF OPTIMISM PREVAILS IN LEBANESE, ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL CIRCLES WITH APPROACH OF RELAXATION OF CRISIS IN LEBANON. DR. AL-KHOLI: 'COMING DAYS WILL WITNESS POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS.'"

2. PRESS REPORTED MEETING BETWEEN SARKIS AND AL REP AL-KHOLI TO REVIEW LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON. AT CONCLUSION OF UNCLASSIFIED

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MEETING AL-KHOLI VOICED OPTIMISM THAT SOLUTION TO CRISIS AT

HAND AND CALLED UPON ALL PARTIES TO MAINTAIN FULL CONFIDENCE IN NEW LEBANESE PRES. DR. AL-KHOLI NOTED THAT LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN MEETING SCHEDULED FOR SEPT. 24 POSTPONED UNTIL SEPT. 25, WHEN DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN MILITARY REPS OF SARKIS AND PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP WOULD TAKE PLACE. SARKIS ALSO RECEIVED NUMBER OF LEBANESE OFFICIALS, INCLUDING GHASSAN TWEINI AND ROMAN CATHOLIC PATRIARCH MAXIMOS HAKIM.

3. ACCORDING TO PRESS, LEBANESE, ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL CIRCLES CONTINUED TO WELCOME SARKIS' ASSUMPTION OF DUTIES.

4. PRESS REPORTED ESCALATION OF CLASHES ON TRADITIONAL FIGHTING FRONTS, "IN SPITE OF ANNOUNCEMENT BY RESISTANCE THAT IT HAS INSTRUCTED ITS FORCES TO OBSERVE CEASE FIRE IN LEBANON AS OF 2100 L SEPT. 23, A DECISION WHICH HAS ANNOYED JUMBLATT." PRESS CLAIMED CEASEFIRE DECISION HAD CAUSED HEATED ARGUMENTS WITHIN LEFTIST RANKS.

5. AL-THAWRAH EDITORIAL NOTED THAT ALL RIVAL FACTIONS HAD AGREED SARKIS WAS ONLY PERSON QUALIFIED TO HEAL NATION, AND ASSERTED THAT HIS INAUGURATION WOULD PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY TO TEST SINCERITY OF PARTIES. EDITORIAL PERCEIVED "DECISIVE TURNING POINT DICTATING NECESSITY FOR ALL ADVERSARIES TO THROW DOWN THEIR ARMS AND PROCEED TO NEGOTIATING TABLE PRE-SIDED OVER BY PRES. SARKIS IN SEARCH FOR NEW FORMULA FOR NEW LEBANON." AL-THAWRAH PROMISED THAT SYRIA WILL CONTINUE TO HONOR ITS PLEDGES TO LEBANESE ARAB BROTHERS.

MURPHY

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